THE SENECA INDIAN TRAIL

(By Hu Maxwell)

The great war trail followed by the Indians from New York to South Carolina, is known in history as the Seneca Trail, so called from a tribe of Indians in New York near Niagara Falls, which tribe was a member of the Six Nations, or Iroquois. The common pronounciation of the name in early times was "Senegar," a corruption of the name Seneca. The pioneers often spoke of all the Indians from New York as the "Senegars." That pronounciation of the word is still heard in West Virginia, even when it is applied to the creek of that name in Pendleton county, or the imposing cliff at the mouth of that stream, which has the name from the fact that the Seneca Trail passed that way. The mountaineers speak of "Senegar" creek, and that is simply a pronouncing of the word as the pioneers called it, and it is not particularly wrong. Early Virginia books have the spelling "Senegar" instead of Seneca.

The Seneca Trail crossed West Virginia, and portions of the trail are well known here yet, particularly in Pendleton and Randolph counties. The old path started from near Niagara Falls on its way to South Carolina, and no fact is better known than that it crossed several counties of West Virginia. It went from Niagara Falls on its way to Pittsburgh. That is certain. From Pittsburgh it ascended the Youghiogheny river to its source, not far from Oakland or Aurora. There appears a gap of forty or fifty miles before a point is reached near Elkins where the trail is found again. The question is what route did the old path follow from the head of the Youghiogheny to Elkins? The trail connected the two points, but it has long been doubtful by what route it passed from near Oakland to the town of Elkins.

I spent several days during the past summer in trying to find the route of the old Indian path over the doubtful territory. I followed most of the distance on foot or in an automobile where there was a road, and I believe that I helped to locate the Seneca trail along the doubtful territory. In doing that investigation during the past summer, I traveled by train 632 miles, by automobile 1845 miles, by road wagons 20 miles, and on foot 150 miles. I mention this to show that I did not dismiss the subject "with a lick and a promise," but tried to make a fairly complete search. In doing it I visited Pittsburgh on the north and Richmond on the south, and went over most of the intermediate territory.

places was in fact the Seneca trail. I reached that conclusion by reasoning and in most cases by direct evidence, for all persons who might remember back to the pioneer days are now dead. There is evidence from history and tradition that there was an Indian trail of some sort up Horseshoe run, and that the first settlers followed it and continued to travel it till they could make better roads. It is this pioneer road which was thus established that exists in places to this day, that I identified as the old Indian trail, I believe that I am justified in asserting that the Indian path which certainly led up Horseshoe run was in fact the Seneca trail. If that is the case, and I believe it is, the missing link in the route of the trail between Elkins and the source of the Youghiogheny river has been found, and it is exactly in the place where reason says it ought to be to fit the known facts.

I was interested, and somewhat disconcerted, to find that there was another Indian trail from St. George to the waters of the Youghingheny, besides that up Horseshoe run, a parallel path which follows the top Location Ridge leaving the river at St. George and reaching Aurora sixteen miles distant, and there uniting with the Horseshoe run branch of the Seneca trail. This ridge road, was, I believe, a wet weather route which the Indians followed when high waters prevented them from traveling the path along the creeks. I did not follow this branch, but the citizens told me of it.

The Seneca trail across West Virginia figured in the history of the Indians before the coming of the white people, rather than the affair of the men of the white race. The Six Nation drove the Indians out of the part of West Virginia between the Allegheny mountains and the Ohio river nearly a century before the settlements of the white race were planted between the mountains and the river. The date of this Indian conquest of their fellow Indian tribes is usually placed from 1666 to 1672. After that occurrence it seems that the region between the Alleghenies and the Ohio, had no permanent Indian inhabitants, but was occasionally roamed over by wandering bands from beyond the Ohio. The conquerors of the Six Nations, never settled in the region, and when the white settlers came they found the land vacant. It is not known that there was a permanent Indian wigwam between the mountains and the river at that time. There was evidence, however, that there had been a former population. The presence of stone heaps which were old graves of Indians, is [illegible] former population. Such

old paths are not so much changed from that day but that we are sure that it was here the wild red man went on his march of death. He is gone now, but the paths which his feet trod may yet be seen and identified.

If the suggestion is carried out (and I hope it shall be) that marks be set up along the Seneca Trail to show where it passed, I suggest among the locations for such marks the site of a spring of water in Greenwalt Gap in Pendleton county, where an Indian died, and near where he was buried in a crevice of a cliff (I have photographed the grave). This is the furthest south that I ever could find the Seneca Trail. The Indian who died there was the one wounded in the attack on Fort Seybert in 1758. The Indians, then retreating, followed Seneca Trail to Pittsburg, and I believe they were the last Indians who so followed it all the way.

Other marks to locate the old path could be set up at almost a thousand places between the mouth of Seneca Creek and Elkins, as the location is perhaps the best known along that thirty miles. Other marks could be placed on Indian Fork of Clover nearly in front of the house where Mr. Haddox lives, for the path is plainly seen there. Another mark might be placed on the point of the mountain near the mouth of Clover run, nearly opposite the late residence of Senator William Ewin. At the highest point of the county road at Low Gap, on the east side of the road, might be another marker. Another could be set at Schoolhouse run, on the western side of the road where the old path led up the steep bank into the field. Another could be located at the Dog Road ravine, on the top of the high bank, where the out line of an old path is visible in the upper end of Mr. Auvil's orchard. Perhaps so many markers would not be found desirable. If not, they might be limited to the location on Indian Fork of Clover run and at the top of Low Gap. Of course there should be a marker or two in Randolph county, and in Pendleton county, for there the Seneca Trail is best known and its exact location is beyond a doubt and has never been doubted, because it has been traveled since before the first white man lived in Randolph county. This great highway of the Red men ought to be marked in some way in Randolph, Tucker, and Pendleton counties, as a matter of history and local pride. The great path should not be forgotten. I was glad to note the last time I was in Randolph, which was a few weeks ago, that a fine highway was being built along the route of the trail, and for a distance I was able to drive my automobile over the [illegible] which the Six Nations

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According to what I ascertained from the records, and found by personal search on the ground in four states, it is my belief that the "missing link" in the old Seneca trail, between Elkins and the head of the Youghiogheny, is about as follows:

From Elkins the trail crossed and ascended the Valley of Leading Creek to the base of Laurel Hill; passed over that mountain to the head of Indian Fork of Clover run, went down that stream to its mouth near St. George; followed the face of the mountain to the Horseshoe; and [illegible] across the level land to the [illegible] of [illegible] run. There the [illegible] river and reached [illegible] south side of [illegible] path there is [illegible] it is on Clover [illegible] of St. [illegible] in [illegible] a [illegible]

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In considering the Seneca Trail as a path across our state, it becomes interestingto bear in mind that along that old path came conquering bands of the Six Nations in their advance upon the former tribes of this region. It does not require much help from the imagination to picture the long line of savages from the north creeping along the trail through the forests, bent on blood and destruction of the native Indians of this territory. I have followed these old trails, and in several instances was able to make [illegible]

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I will say a word as to the evidence of the path found in different

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